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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002658

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SU](#) [ET](#)  
SUBJECT: SE WILLIAMSON DISCUSSES SUDAN WITH PRIME MINISTER  
MELES AND STATE MINISTER TEKEDA

Classified By: Amb. Donald Yamamoto Reason: 1.4(B).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles on August 8 told visiting Special Envoy for Sudan Williamson that Ethiopia was preparing to send four helicopter gunships to Darfur, and that two additional helicopters could be provided with assistance for upgrades or if the United Nations relaxed its technical requirements. Meles emphasized that the gunships should be co-located with the Ethiopian troops for fire-support. Meles predicted that there would be no near-term peace process breakthrough in Darfur, and that Khartoum would become even less flexible in its policies. Meles thought that Khartoum would remove Chadian President Deby without delay if Khartoum thought the blowback from the international community was manageable. He said that the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment against Sudanese President Bashir would harden the positions of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and close divisions within its ranks. On the Ethio-Sudanese border problems, Meles said that both governments were committed to working the issues out responsibly at the national level. Separately, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu on August 8 repeated Meles' points regarding the Sudan border and emphasized that the border needed to be demarcated. END SUMMARY.

Meles: "Six Helicopters Possible for UNAMID if..."  
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12. (C/NF) Responding to the Special Envoy's query, Meles said that his government was open to providing as many as six helicopters for Darfur, but he said that he could not fulfill that requirement immediately. He said that his government was upgrading four helicopters to UN standards now, although he did not clarify whether the upgrade included night vision capabilities, and that two more helicopters could be provided with additional assistance and more time. Meles stated that the timeline for aircraft deployment could be accelerated if the UN were to relax its requirements and allow the helos to be deployed as is.

13. (C/NF) Meles also raised that Ethiopia has always assumed that its troops in Darfur would be targeted by "friends" of Eritrea, and for that reason, he has pushed for the Ethiopian peacekeeping troops to be properly equipped with armor and artillery. He said that the UN had rejected Ethiopian deployment of those assets, and therefore, the helicopter gunships would be the only significant firepower support for the troops. Meles said it was important that the gunships be co-located with Ethiopian ground forces so that

they would have adequate protection. He emphasized that he was reluctant to depend on other UN assets to protect his soldiers. Williamson agreed to raise the issue with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) and investigate whether a way could be found to accommodate some of Meles' concerns regarding both the technical requirements for the aircraft and the issue of operational control and deployment.

14. (C/NF) Meles added that there had been changes in the political environment since Ethiopia first agreed to provide troops for the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). He said that at first Khartoum was positive about the Ethiopian deployment, but "these days" after Ethiopia's training of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) he had noticed a significant "reduction in enthusiasm" from Sudan for the Ethiopian battalions.

Meles: "No Near-Term Darfur Peace Process Breakthrough"

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15. (C/NF) Meles did not foresee any breakthrough in the Darfur peace process in the next six months and he said that he would not be surprised if Khartoum became less flexible in its positions. He expected that Khartoum would use the peacekeeping force as leverage with the international community in the same way Eritrean President Isaias had done with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

16. (C/NF) Regarding the threat to Khartoum from the Justice

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and Equality Movement (JEM), Meles thought that Khartoum would shore up its support and military capacity from among its Arab base in Darfur, and concentrate on the Zaghawa rebels with the goal of eliminating them as a threat. Politically, he expected Khartoum to focus on the Fur because he said both Khartoum and the SPLA were competing for the loyalty of the Fur to use as a political ally against the other.

View on Chad-Sudan Dynamics

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17. (C/NF) Khartoum would remove Chadian President Deby from power directly if they assessed that the peacekeepers in eastern Chad would not interfere, and the reaction from the international community was not too severe, according to Meles. He said the minority Zaghawa Chadian government was weak and could easily be replaced by any of the many non-Zaghawa groups in Chad. Khartoum thinks that the true mission of the peacekeeping force in eastern Chad is a European effort to protect Deby's government, rather than protect refugees. Sudanese President Bashir is unsure what the peacekeeping force and the French would do if Sudanese regular military units crossed the border. Meles said if Khartoum thought that the reaction from Russia, China, and the Arab League would be minimal, then "there is no reason why Khartoum would not move at the earliest possible time."

Meles: "ICC Indictment Likely to Close Ranks Within NCP"

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18. (C/NF) Meles assessed that the ICC's indictment against President Bashir would harden the position of the NCP as well as eliminate, or close, divisions within the ruling party. Meles said that the focus of the NCP would now be regime survival more than ever, and that the military and the Arab groups in Darfur now felt more secure understanding that Bashir needs them. Prior to the indictment, when the prospect of peace was more likely, both the military and the militias in Darfur feared they would be sacrificed, but no longer. The true hard-liners in the government would also be strengthened because they would interpret the indictment as proof that the international community's, and in particular

the United States', true goal in Khartoum was regime change. Meles said that he doubts the NCP will make any serious changes. He predicted the regime will restrain itself, but not hand anyone over to the court. Also he said that the idea that Article 16 could result in changes in the NCP's behavior was "a joke," and stated there would be no change as a result of a suspension of ICC action.

"Ethio-Sudanese Border Problem a Misunderstanding," Meles  
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¶9. (C/NF) Meles said that the recent problems between Ethiopia and Sudan regarding their common border were primarily based on a misunderstanding and local interests taking provocative actions. Meles stated that recently a SPLA unit that had been receiving military training and a dozen armored vehicles from Ethiopia crossed back into Sudan near Kurmuk in the north without informing the northern Sudanese government, and then drove to the south. Khartoum thought this movement was some kind of incursion and overreacted. Meles said "we made a mistake," and next time he would make sure the SPLA enter Sudan directly into the south. He commented that since then, the two governments had had "heart to heart" talks and things had quieted down.

¶10. (C/NF) Meles went on to note that President Isaias was attempting to use Sudanese territory to destabilize Ethiopia, and that Eritrea was using illegal Eritrean-Sudanese cross-border trade to prop up Eritrea's failing economy. He also believed that Sudan was selectively deporting Eritrean refugees to Eritrea. He said that Ethiopia's priorities regarding Sudan were to stop infiltration through Sudanese territory, create a suitable environment for refugees, and curtail Eritrea's illegal economic activities. He said his government was engaged with Khartoum on all of these issues and that they had made some progress. The Eritrean activities were still occurring, but he was unsure whether they were operating with or without a green light from

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Khartoum.

"Ethio-Sudanese Border Demarcation Needed," Tekeda  
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¶11. (C/NF) In a separate meeting on August 8, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told SE Williamson that the underlying issue between Ethiopia and Sudan was the need for border demarcation. He said that Ethiopia and Sudan had concluded a border demarcation agreement in 1972, but that Emperor Haile Selassie's government "left power" before physical demarcation could take place. He said that the Derg government also accepted the agreement without implementing it. Tekeda said both governments were committed to resolving this issue responsibly, although he commented that some in Sudan might be disposed to create complications. Nevertheless, he expected the issue to be handled in a "civilized manner." He repeatedly stressed, however, that "Ethiopia will not be pushed around by the Sudanese."

YAMAMOTO